

Message Text

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LIMDIS, NOFORN

USEEC

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: ELAB, ICFTU

SUBJ: ICFTU BOARD MEETING: FUTURE OF OTTO KERSTEN

1. ON THE MARGIN OF THE ICFTU BOARD MEETING IN HAMBURG THIS WEEK, THERE WILL BE A SPECIAL MEETING OF A SMALL GROUP OF ICFTU BOARD MEMBERS TO DISCUSS SENSITIVE ISSUES FACING THE ICFTU. ONE OF THESE ISSUES IS THE POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT OF ICFTU GENERAL SECRETARY OTTO KERSTEN.
 2. THE SOURCE OF THIS INFORMATION, A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE ICFTU SECRETARIAT, BELIEVES STRONGLY THAT KERSTEN MUST GO, AND HE LINKS KERSTEN'S DEPARTURE WITH THE NEXT WORLD CONGRESS IN MADRID IN OCTOBER 1979. "NO MATTER WHAT KIND OF BEAUTIFUL PROGRAM WE ADOPT FOR THE ICFTU IN MADRID," HE SAYS, "EVERYONE WILL KNOW IT IS NOT SERIOUS IF KERSTEN REMAINS IN OFFICE."
 3. KERSTEN HAS GIVEN NO SIGN THAT HE EXPECTS TO LEAVE. HOWEVER, ONE PURPOSE OF THE SPECIAL MEETING IN HAMBURG, SAYS OUR SOURCE, IS TO MOVE AHEAD THE PROCESS OF PERSUADING DGB PRESIDENT HEINZ OSKAR VETTER TO FIND ANOTHER JOB FOR THE 49-YEAR-OLD KERSTEN. OUR SOURCE SAYS THAT MANY EUROPEAN AND ASIAN BOARD MEMBERS ARE "FED UP"
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WITH KERSTEN, ESSENTIALLY BECAUSE HE IS ALLEGEDLY NOT UP TO THE JOB.

4. OUR SOURCE IS AWARE THAT THE AFL-CIO IS NOT ENAMORED OF KERSTEN, AND IN FACT IS HIMSELF A POTENTIAL CANDIDATE TO SUCCEED KERSTEN. AS A RESULT, HE MAY BE OVERSTATING THE EXTENT OF ICFTU BOARD MEMBERS' DISENCHANTMENT WITH KERSTEN.

5. NEVERTHELESS, SOMETHING MAY BE STIRRING. OTHER ICFTU SECRETARIAT MEMBERS HAVE CASUALLY MADE KNOWN THEIR CRITICISM OF KERSTEN RECENTLY, AS THOUGH THEY SUSPECTED HIS DAYS MIGHT BE NUMBERED. ALSO, ACCORDING TO AN ETUC SOURCE, THE NORDIC UNIONS HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING KERSTEN BUT APPARENTLY WITHOUT ANY CONCLUSION, EXCEPT FOR THE AMBIGUOUS ONE THAT "KERSTEN'S DEPARTURE WON'T SOLVE THE ICFTU'S PROBLEMS."

6. THE SPECIAL HAMBURG SESSION, ACCORDING TO OUR ICFTU SOURCE, WILL DISCUSS THE PERSONNEL ISSUE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THOSE OTHER ICFTU PROBLEMS, INCLUDING THE CONTINUED ABSENCE OF THE AFL-CIO. PARTICIPANTS IN THE INFORMAL DISCUSSION, WE ARE TOLD, WILL BE WIM KOK OF HOLLAND, THOMAS NIELSEN OF DENMARK, LUIGI MACARIO OF ITALY, AND ONE OR TWO OTHERS, BUT WITHOUT ANY MEMBERS OF THE ICFTU SECRETARIAT.

7. THE ABOVE INFORMATION WAS VOLUNTEERED TO USEC LABOR ATTACHE. WE HAVE NOT ACTIVELY PURSUED THE ISSUE, LEST WE SPARK CRITICISM THAT "THE AMERICANS" ARE BEHIND TALK ABOUT REPLACING KERSTEN. HINTON

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